

Catherine Campbell Murdoch
and
David William Hicken

Few people are born into the world with the qualities of spirit that came with Catherine Campbell Murdoch, always called Kate, born on November 15, 1864, in Heber City, Utah. She was the second child of John Murray Murdoch and Isabella Crawford, John M.'s second wife. Kate, named Catherine Campbell after her mother's best friend, was eighteen months younger than her sister Maggie (Margaret Ann), and the love between the two sisters endured beyond Maggie's death in 1904 until Kate's death on March 6, 1945.

Kate was a family person. The members of her own family were always seen by her through heavy veils of love, and they could do little or no wrong in her eyes. And she had room in her heart to love many, many people.

It was Maggie to whom Kate spoke in the days before her death. "Who am I talking to? Where are your eyes, girl? Aunt Mag is sitting right there in that chair beside you!" But Maggie was probably no dearer to her than Jock (John Murray Murdoch--the sixth child; or Brig; or Jim; or Tressa (Isabella Crawford Murdoch--the seventh child); or any of the others. A visit from Thomas Murdoch, Uncle Tom, was a delight she looked forward to for days. Tom was a child of Ann Steel Murdoch, John M.'s first wife. He was two years younger than Kate. She said once that she didn't know until she was "a girl grown that Tom was a half-brother." And perhaps he was favored even a bit over those boys born of her own mother.

A visit from any of her relatives was an occasion for cleaning and baking and hoping for a long stay if the relative was from out of town, and if a family member who lived in town came for less than a day-long visit, she would see them out the door with regret. Kate had been reared in the Mormon way--people provided the main entertainment and amusement for themselves in the mountain-bound communities like Heber City, where Kate was to live all of her life. What others did, how they did it, and who said what, were all fascinating subjects for conversation--not exactly gossip, for there was always compassion and understanding and humor in the talk. And if the individual's behavior was questionable, as it could often be in that strict moral climate of Mormon Utah, the subject was given the benefit of the doubt. "Give him the benefit of the doubt," Kate would say. "You weren't there. You don't really know what happened. And if you had been there, you'd have probably done the very same thing. People mostly do what they have to do."

Kate was a gently mischievous child, too loving to

hurt anyone with her mischief, but full of life, wanting to sing and dance and play games and charades. Even in her late years, she was willing to allow her precious basques and skirts of yesteryear to be used in the "plays" her children and grandchildren presented, and while she felt bad about the rents and tears we put into them, she never scolded. "What's done is done."

Small-boned and delicately made, with dark hair and beautiful brown, almond eyes, Kate must have teased her husband-to-be beyond bearing, because David William Hicken once grabbed Aunt Tressa's pet kitten and bobbed its tail when his light-of-love went to a dance with another young man. Years later such frustration had long disappeared from David's character, and the story shocked his children when they were told of it.

But Kate did marry David on July 21, 1886, in the Logan Temple, and the love between them has been an example of marital rapport for their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and perhaps for many others.

Then Kate and Dave became Mama and Papa. Children were very special to them. Not only their own children, but all children. And once in a moment of rapture, love, and selflessness, Mama cried, "Oh, I hope this house is never empty of children." And it never was, during her lifetime. Mama and Papa Hicken had nine children. One of them died in early infancy, one was still-born, and the other seven lived to adulthood. Their second son, Rollo, was killed in a mine accident when he was twenty-five, leaving his young wife seven months pregnant. Their first son, Rodney, died of Bright's disease in 1929, leaving his wife to face the hard depression years with four children, one of them a year-old baby.

In 1901, with five children, one of them a baby of six months, Papa was called on a mission to the Southern States, and he went without "purse or scrip." Mama sewed; the twins, Zoa and Zola, worked as housemaids, ran errands, and literally "sang for their suppers." Young Rodney ran the farm as best he could with Mama's help, and even four-year-old Rollo sold pins to provide himself with a new suit and his mother with an occasional twenty-five cents. Dora Isabella, the baby, provided the family with entertainment. Papa came home from his mission to find the family only five dollars in debt--the last payment on the sewing machine that had supported the family while he was on his mission. However, Mama's and Papa's brothers and sisters had helped the family, too, when they could, and many a pinched penny went out of their pockets into the mission field.

While Mama's family was growing, Mama's sister Maggie died, leaving her family, and the Hicken's took two of the children into their home. They wanted all of them, but considered themselves "privileged" to be able to take two of them, Isabella and Robert. Then Mama's brother Jock's wife, Minnie, died from complications of childbirth, leaving a month-old baby boy, Raymond Nelson, and a three-year-old doll of a

daughter, Bessie. Jock brought the children to his sister, Kate, and went on a mission to the South Seas. Mama moved her two-year-old daughter, Jenny Ann, out of the parental bed, and put the ailing baby in Ann's place.

For weeks the family walked the floor with Ray. Some sort of a glandular trouble in his throat threatened to choke him if he was not kept upright. However, such was the love and cooperation in this household that there was no jealousy, no fear that one child would get more in the way of attention or material things than another. As both Kate and Dave had been reared in polygamous families where all were equally loved brothers and sisters, it made no difference now which children were born of whom. They were children of the family, and they were all loved. If little Jenny Ann was perhaps a bit overzealous in the care of the new little brother, preparing his bottles and substituting him for her not nearly-as-responsive doll, her efforts were appreciated. It was Ann who weaned Raymond from his bottle by mistakenly pouring his milk into a similar bottle that had once held turpentine. One mouthful of the turpentine-flavored milk, and Ray drank from a cup--the easiest weaning Mama had ever known.

Aunt Maggie's husband remarried and came for the Hawkes' children, to Mama's distress, and later, when Bessie was about fourteen, Uncle Jock remarried, and Bessie went to live with her father for a while and later with her mother's brother in Shelley, Idaho. The childless couple adored their lovely little niece. But Raymond had known only Mama and Papa as parents, and he refused to stay home, to his foster parents' great relief.

In 1927, Mama and Papa adopted their granddaughter, Rodello, the daughter of their son, Rollo, who had been killed, and they reared this child to young womanhood. By this time, they were getting on in years, and a life of giving had not left them with any appreciable amount of material wealth, but they felt wealthy. They owned their own home and their land and never knew debt. Papa's gardens fed his family, and there were wagon loads of produce to share with the "sick and afflicted, the poor and the needy, the widow and the orphan," who were included in the daily family prayers.

The story of Catherine Campbell Murdoch Hicken is a family story. She and her adored husband, David, were the pivots around which the family revolved, for they were incredibly strong people. They taught their children by example. Honesty was stressed, and when dishonesty appeared in others, it was a shocking thing. Loving, getting along with one another, appreciation, and making do with what one had without bitterness or envy were the cornerstones of their family life. Mama's budget shortcuts and saving ways have carried over into the lives of her daughters, who still remember her saying, "Watch the pennies, the dollars will take care of themselves."

Mama was a mystery in many ways, a mystery that deepens as the years pass and we become more appreciative of the woman she was. For instance, she quoted Shakespeare frequently

and fluently, but she never said she was quoting from Shakespeare, so it was years later that study made us realize the source of so many of the familiar aphorisms common to our homelife. Where did Mama learn Shakespeare? We had a Complete Works in the small library in the parlor, but when did Mama read it? Did she read it at night? Hardly, when she went to bed at dark to keep the light bills down and her strength up. "Down at dark, up at dawn!" Had she been exposed to Shakespeare in the Murdoch home or in the school years when she had shared the same school benches that Papa sat on? But that is unlikely. Papa knew nothing of Shakespeare. He was a scripture reader. He told us once that he had read only one piece of fiction in his life and "never read another because the last page was torn away and I'd just wasted my time!"

Mama was also familiar with Robert Burns, whom she often quoted: "Oh wad some power the giftie gie us/To see oursels as others see us! It wad frae monie a blunder free us,/An foolish notion." She had read Keats, Shelley, and Brownings, and it is only recently some of us have learned that she wrote poetry, quite passable verse. Most likely, she kept this to herself, for she was in awe of some of her elder sister's gifts along this line, and Mama was much too modest. While she told her children that they were "not to hide their lights under a bushel," she very carefully hid her own most of the time. Mama had read Hawthorne's books and Poe's and most of the early well-known English and American writers. Did she pick these things up from her children as they grew and went through the Wasatch County Schools? She knew much more than we realized she knew until we had lived long enough to learn some of it.

She avidly read the novels of Kathleen Norris (published in *The Deseret News* in serial form) and Temple Bailey and Faith Baldwin. She never missed a column by Dorothy Dix. She read the women's Church magazines assiduously. She loved the poetry and short stories and the articles in *The Young Woman's Journal* and in *The Relief Society Magazine* (oh, how she looked forward to that magazine!) and the *Era*. But she may have been of two minds about the *Exponent*. For if ever a woman looked to her husband for leadership, it was Mama. To a point. The house was Mama's domain and she ran it. But it was run for Papa's convenience and comfort, and if Papa was late for dinner, all of us waited for him. Mama could often soften a decision he had made, but the softening was done in private and then Papa would come to us with, "Well, I've been thinking this over, and hasty judgment is not always good judgment. Why don't we talk over what you want to do again?" But we learned that when this happened, it was because sometime between night and morning, Mama had said something like this: "You can't hold love in a closed fist, you squeeze it right out. Love only stays in an open hand."

Papa led and Mama followed serenely, except for the times when Papa wasn't there, and then Mama could put her size-five feet into his big boots and march ahead without

faltering. Their lives revolved around the Church and the Church activities, and even after Mama was far along in years, she looked forward to "doing her best" (going Relief Society teaching). She enjoyed the activities of the Relief Society and especially enjoyed being a Daughter of the Utah Pioneers.

Mama loved plays and later the movies, although she couldn't afford to go very often. Twenty-five cents was always an expenditure to "look at twice." Most of all, she loved the Murdoch reunions and the singing and laughter, parades, and general family love and enjoyment she found in them. She would save and plan for a year and then cook for a week to be able to attend one of the marvelous clan gatherings that were quite often held in Vivian Park in Provo Canyon. And if Papa couldn't leave, Mama would pack up the cookies, cakes, and kids, and hitch up the wagon and drive the team down herself.

She adored surprises, especially people surprises. Aunt Tressa surprised her about once a year. When Mama opened the front door, the two of them would stare solemnly at each other with no word of greeting. Then Mama would open the door an inch at a time, and Aunt Tressa would push her way in. And they would smile a little, and when Aunt Tressa was finally in all the way, they would smile a lot. Then as the families (because they were never alone) watched in amazement, Mama would get down behind a chair and peek through the slats in the back and giggle, and Aunt Tressa would squeeze behind the overstuffed chair and peek out and giggle, and before long their laughter would fill the room and engulf us all. And we never knew what they were laughing at--these grown and dignified women--in their sixties--who had never really grown up!

After the laughter had finally calmed to chuckles, and tears of joy were wiped away, and Aunt Tressa had gone out into the garden to make herself a lettuce and sugar sandwich, there were the days of visiting and "catching up." We would slip as unobtrusively as possible into the rooms where they were talking, to hear, if we could, all the perfectly marvelous things they talked about--the marriages, births, illnesses, interesting diseases, bankruptcies, and deaths, and their opinions of all of these. The opinions were gentle. We thought we must have very good people in our family, because we didn't know of one dishonest person, although we heard of a few that were "close" (tight-fisted) or who "had to get married." (But they were not discussed.) We realize now that the people in our family (uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.) weren't so much "good" as they were surrounded by love and guidance, and as Mama said often enough, "Children must be given the iron rod to grasp." When we asked her about that iron rod, she explained that it was the word of God. Then there was the Golden Rule. We didn't hear so much about the Golden Rule--we saw it lived, and lived, and lived.

Mama played the jews harp, and she could twang out anything you wanted. She could also play the harmonica. She told marvelous, detailed stories about the family past, the Indians, the days of polygamy, and life with her parents.

She was a poet and a writer without a pen. When we asked her what she thought of polygamy, she would say that their own family was close and loving, and the names Mother and Muz were always spoken in the same breath; but then she would shake her head and say, "But I'm glad that's in the past; polygamy is not for me!" Once in a while, ususally after a visit with her half-sisters, she would shake her head and murmur, "Being a child of the second wife is always down on the stick, no matter how it's whittled!" or "To my way of thinking, it was the first wife who is the 'tony' one." And after the Manifesto, her feeling about the differences in plural wives strengthened, but they were never strong enough nor bitter enough to lessen her brother-sister relationships.

Mama was a fine seamstress, and she quilted beautifully and shook her head in dismay if one of us sewed a crooked stitch. She was also an excellent cook, although there was never a cookbook in our house, but she was an implacable teacher. Her idea of teaching us to do something was to say, "You are ten years old; you've watched me mix the bread hundreds of times; now it's your turn. I'm going visiting. You mix the bread while I'm gone." There was never anything but praise for the grayish, hard-textured, unrisen loaves turned out, except from Papa: "Just as one of them learns how to make good bread, you start another one out!" But the next time Mama mixed bread, you watched, and the next time it was your turn the bread looked more nearly like the luscious white loaves that Mama made.

Mama made an occasion of everything. If a child sang a song for the family or bore testimony in fast meeting, it was an excuse for celebration. She must have baked thousands of celebration cakes in her lifetime. She would work for hours to be repaid by a child's smile of pleasure, and each Christmas was months of careful stitching, because her gifts were made with very little money and a lot of skill and imagination.

Mama's pride was her family. The picture of the U.S.S. Kidder, rope-framed, hung on her living room wall. That was Ward's ship, and Ward, the youngest son, had made the Navy his life. She never knew that her fondest dream was fulfilled when he married and moved back to Heber for several years. Rodney's boyhood drawing of a bear hung on another wall, and in Mama's eyes it had all the excellence of the oil paintings that Papa had so carefully carried back from the mission field. Her daughters were loving and thoughtful and constantly brightened her life with letters, gifts, and, as frequently as possible, visits.

Mama "set a store by good breeding," and that included giving the best you had to company--your bed, while you slept on the floor; your dessert, if necessary; and anything else you had that someone needed more than you did. It was keeping a pleasant face and a welcoming voice when someone came to visit that you would rather had stayed at home. It was "minding your manners," speaking when spoken to, being seen and not heard, and always doing what you said you would

do. It was keeping your word. I learned the word "noblesse oblige" from Mama. Where did Mama learn it?

Good breeding was keeping your skirts down and your knees together, and sitting properly on the chair. It was keeping your hair brushed, and wearing clean underclothes. Mama had a great admiration for "tony" people. People who entertained with originality and flare; who dressed neatly, but elegantly; and who spoke softly. "A voice, gentle, soft, and low--an excellent thing in a woman!" Mama never raised her voice except to call Raymond home from play, and it was an effort that made it very interesting. "Ray"--the name would start out softly and would rise--"moond." But it carried. When Ray heard "moond" he started for home. When asked why she didn't get a whistle, Mama said, "You whistle for a dog!"

Mama had the gift of second sight. Mostly she dreamed things that would happen, and sometimes they happened and sometimes they didn't, if she could convince Papa to take steps to prevent them. It was Mama's gift of second sight that sent Papa out in the night to rescue a son with a broken leg; his horse had fallen on him while crossing a creek. It was this gift that sent Papa to Salt Lake City to find the grandchild, Rodello, whose mother had dropped from sight, taking the child with her.

Well-bred people took what came and made the best of it and did not complain, Mama thought. Mama didn't complain. She had rheumatism and arthritis and a bout with cancer; and in her later years, dangerously low blood pressure caused her to black out at times, and she had broken bones and terrible burns from falling on the stove, but she bore them without more than a small moan. She was a delicately made woman, and was heir to all the discomforts of such women, but she welcomed every pregnancy and accepted gladly the dangers of childbirth in those pioneer times. After she caught her arm in the wringer of her new washing machine, only the look in her eyes as she stared at the scars and the twisted fingers of her damaged hand let us know that she suffered. Her stoicism as she lay a year with a broken hip was amazing, but it was indicative of her life. If she couldn't smile about what happened, she said very little.

So it was with her grieving. She had much to grieve about: the deaths of loved parents and brothers and sisters; the tragedies of her sons' deaths; the loss of her babies, not only the children she had borne, but those like Isabella and Robert and Bessie who were taken away from her after they had settled in her heart. But she did not mourn or cry as many women do; she made the dead come alive with her remembering, and she spoke so frequently and lovingly of the living that when we younger ones met them, we knew them as well as those whom we saw daily. If Mama cried, she did it when she was alone. And when was she ever alone?

Aloud, she counted herself a happy woman with children who grew to be law-abiding, God-fearing, productive people.

And she was always sheltered by the strong arms and character of the man she loved. If she worried about the depression years, her worries were confined to seeing enough food on the table and beds for the homeless wanderers who mysteriously found their way to her home. At least, those were the only worries she allowed us to see. It is quite likely that she did not fear at all, because she had complete faith in God and in his goodness, and in Papa's abilities to take care of everything. Or perhaps again, it was because well-bred people "do not complain; they take what they have and make something good come of it." She did this.

Mama disliked vanity in others, and she made sure that her daughters had none of it. Sometimes her tongue could be exceedingly sharp, and she would say, if we stood at the mirror a whit too long, "You're pretty enough, and looking at yourself won't make you prettier!" and "Pretty is as pretty does!" Yet Mama had her own small vanities. She was proud of her truly beautiful legs and feet--slender ankles and wrists were a mark of breeding, she pointed out. Even when she was in her late seventies, she wore girlish pumps and buckles, and she loved silk stockings.

She thought that daintiness was the essence of womanhood, and she admired women who could get through a pregnancy with as few people knowing as possible. "You'd never know that Helen (Rodney's wife) was in a family way right up to the day she delivered, unless she told you!" Helen wore pretty front aprons, and Mama loved lacy aprons, embroidered linens, pieced quilts, and silk dresses. But her main passion was fine china, especially blue and white patterns. She loved flowers and growing things, birds and animals. And her quick eye and sense of humor allowed her to see daily the priceless little things with which she made her life and the lives of others rich--for instance, a cat teaching a kitten to wash its face and impatiently cuffing it if the kitten proved inept. Mama empathized with that cat. She expected her kitten to learn in one lesson, and Mama expected her children to learn just as quickly. It was justification from the animal world for her way of thinking. Not that Mama was harsh; far from that, she was more than gentle, except when driven to a willow switch, which the offender had to go out and cut for himself, and it took a while to learn that the smaller the switch, the more it stung.

The Hicken house was always full as long as Mama was alive. She had long visits from relatives with their large families, and no matter how many people came, the walls and the tables stretched to accommodate them. Grandma Murdoch, Mama's mother, lived for several years in the front room, and her gentle spirit was still there for the youngest of us as we grew up. Mama's wish that her home would always have children in it was fulfilled. Rodney's baby daughter, Rhea Jean, was to grow up at the other end of the Hicken block, and long after the other children had grown and gone, Rhea Jean would spend her days playing at Mama's feet, or when Mama's eyes

were dulled by old age and ill health, her arms were ready to hold a child with an earache or a heartache.

On her deathbed, two of her small great granddaughters were visiting, and while the granddaughter took a turn caring for Mama, she heard the little voices in the kitchen and asked, "Whose children are they? Bring them in here." "But we thought they might disturb you." "Never, never. It is always so good to hear the young ones play. Please don't keep them from me."

To Mama, life was a gift filled with people she loved, worked for, gave to, protected, and encouraged--most of all encouraged. If you were a relative or friend of Catherine Campbell Murdoch Hicken's, you were wonderful, accomplished, beloved, and welcomed. And because of this, Mama Kate didn't really die in 1945 at the age of eighty. She just slipped into another room, from where she calls out to us, "Oh, my, you are doing just fine. I'm so proud of you, and I can hardly wait until you can find the time to come and stay awhile with me. Our door is never locked; if we're not here when you come, just come right in and make yourself at home. I've just gone out to chop that rooster's head off so we can have chicken and dumplings for dinner!"

(This profile of Catherine Campbell Murdoch Hicken was written by her granddaughter, Rodello Hicken Hunter Calkins.) Copyright 1979 by Rodello Hunter.)



"House of Many Rooms." Hicken Home--Heber, Utah.



HICKEN FAMILY— A turn-of-the century- photo of Kate Hicken and children. Twins, Zoa and Zola, elder son, Rodney, younger son Rollo, and holding baby daughter, Dora.

This is a picture of Kate Hicken and family while David W. Hicken was on his mission in the Southern States Mission, 1902-1903. Ward and Ann were born after he came home.



Gathering at the golden wedding anniversary of Kate and David W. Hicken: left to right: Harry Christenson; Grandma Park (Billys mother), Dora Larson holding Linda Ann Larson, infant of Dora; Ann Dawson, behind Dora; Kathryn Park; Zoa Christenson; Kate Hicken; David W. Hicken; in front, Vivian Christenson; Ladorna Larson; Rodello Hicken, behind Bessie Dawson; LuRae Frkovich; boy in front, Tony Larson; behind Tony, someone from California with Larsons--likely a relative of Lloyds; Ann Hicken; Lloyd Larson; Zola Park; Ray Park; Billie Park; Dee Christenson. Insert: Ward Hicken, who was away in the Navy when the anniversary picture was taken.



Catherine C. Murdoch Hicken and David W. Hicken at their golden wedding anniversary, July 1936, surrounded by flowers at their home.